

next speaker, we have guests in the north balcony. Senator Bohlke has 14 third and fifth graders from Holstein Public School in Holstein, Nebraska, with their teacher. And Senator Stuhr has 25 third and fourth graders from St. Paul's Lutheran School in Utica with their teacher. Would you all please stand and be recognized by the Legislature. Thank you for coming today. Senator Maurstad, your light is next.

SENATOR MAURSTAD: Thank you, Mr. President, Thank you, Mr. President. First of all, I want to make sure that my comments aren't taken...to be taken in opposition to this, to LB 860. At this point, I haven't quite decided where I fall, but I, you know, want to listen to the remainder of the deliberation but I do have some concerns relative to Internet, and I would have raised those concerns if I would have been in the Legislature when the bill that funded the ESUs was adopted. I am going to use...I am going to start off my comments taking off of what Senator Witek said a little bit about wanting to provide each state senator with the opportunity to be able to hook into Internet. Now that might be fine for those that are in Lincoln and Omaha, but even if the authority was there, I couldn't access it from Beatrice, and my concern is that we not do the same thing that we did with ESUs, and that is to provide them with the authority, but nobody else in the area can access into it. Now I think that technology needs to be looked at more globally than just providing it to the ESUs or to the public schools or whatever, but that we should continue to encourage technology counsels in the various areas in the State of Nebraska, provide...fund them so that they are able to provide Internet and other technological advances that will come along, and so that we don't duplicate on the services. All we really need in Beatrice to provide Internet to essentially business, industry, public schools, hospitals, and homes is the trunk line to do it, and the people in my area are working on trying to accomplish that. The school will then be able to tap into it and do a lot of the things that Senator Robinson wants to propose to do in LB 860. And I understand that providing the access to it is only a part of what he is proposing, and that's why I am still...still looking at this very closely. My only comments at this stage of the deliberation is just to raise some concern that we look at this in a more global fashion in the various areas and communities that we represent, and consider that as opposed to just providing it to one specific aspect of our various communities.